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THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

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CANADIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

Classis Huron gets taste of front-line Kingdom action

Church and organizations need each other, say agency reps

Bert Witvoet

LISTOWEL, Ont. — It's not unusual for a classis of the Christian Reformed Church to be addressed by one or two representatives of Christian agencies, but to have representatives of eight organizations speak in succession is unheard of, out of the question ... except in Classis Huron.

This assembly of 21 area churches set aside an hour and a half at its January 12 meeting to focus on Kingdom action beyond church walls.

The idea was the brainchild

of Guelph University chaplain Edward Den Haan. He and his fellow Christian Reformed university chaplains have been saying for a while that the "Kingdom" vision, which has set churches of the Reformed faith apart from evangelical and mainline churches, seems to be on the wane.

Den Haan spoke of a "concern for the churches' need to bring our heritage into contemporary vital ministry." He introduced the afternoon session by speaking of the pain he and colleagues share with "the King of

kings in the birthing of the new Kingdom."

Stories of pain

In what was seen by organizers as a pilot project, four agency representatives first read a brief story of pain that came out of their particular ministry.

Graham Morbey, chaplain at Waterloo University, talked about Karen, a brilliant but troubled student who stopped going to church. Albert Dreise of Salem Christian Mental

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PHOTO: BERT WITVOET

Classis Huron delegates discuss the painful reality of abuse in the church.

Home(school) and school should not compete, say teaching parents

Irene Bom

WHITBY, Ont. — Stereotype #1: Parents who homeschool are either right-wing fanatics or left-wing radicals.

Stereotype #2: They enjoy spreading nasty rumours about the local school.

Not so and not true, insist several homeschooling parents, who say they are tired of explaining themselves and want schools to understand them and give them support.

"Christian schools and homeschools by Christian parents work from the same worldview. Why are we being seen as competitors?" asks Sandra Flim McRae of Whitby, Ont., who has spent the past

See HOME — p.2...



PHOTO: SANDRA FLIM MCRAE

Reuben (6) learns to add by counting apples in his room.

Homeschooling legit, says Alliance, but...

Irene Bom

ANCASTER, Ont. — The principal of Pickering Christian School just east of Toronto wants to be able to lay two options on the table when parents come to inquire about Christian education.

Option A would be to enrol the child in school.

Option B would be to have the parents homeschool the child and receive regular tips from staff.

"I'd like to have a 1-800 number that homeschooling parents could just call during school hours for advice," says Paul Ogborne. He says his plan would appeal to the "two very different marketing groups" in the school's evangelical community of parents who homeschool and those who don't.

Ogborne's proposal is unusual for schools who are members of Christian Schools International (CSI), but the dilemma that prompts it is not, as more and more parents feel squeezed between a desire for Christian education and the escalating costs of Christian schools.

"Christian schools are getting an increasing number of calls from parents who want to homeschool," says Ralph Luimes, spokesperson for the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools.

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Thinkbit

"I spent my health to gain my wealth. Now I spend my wealth to gain back my health."

A delegate at CRC Classis Huron

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News

New policy shuns full co-operation

Discourages part-timing, introduces supervisor program

...continued from p.1

The Alliance updated its 1986 policy on homeschoolers last month to recognize homeschooling as a legitimate option for Christian parents. But it put the brakes on anything but very guarded co-operation with Christian schools.

CSI has also been researching homeschooling programs and their popularity throughout North America, according to executive director Sheri Haan.

Resentment not issue

In B.C. 2,500 of the approximately 3,500 homeschoolers are registered with independent, mostly Christian

schools, according to Lee Hollaar, education co-ordinator for the Society of Christian Schools in B.C. (SCSBC). About 1,000 of those students are registered in half of the society's 46 schools.

"It's not really an issue anymore," says Hollaar about the resentment that initially flared against parents who chose to homeschool.

Vice-principal of Fraser Valley Christian High School Dennis DeGroot says that's true for the most part. He and his wife Jenny homeschooled their four sons until grade three because they found age five too young to begin school.

"There was certainly a lot of

potential for problems and resentment, but we were very up front with the board that this was not a critique of the school," says DeGroot, who says the matter never came up when he was promoted to vice-principal.

A change in the B.C. Education Act in 1989 may have helped to change attitudes. Parents can now register homeschooled children with accredited independent or correspondence schools as well as with public schools. The province paid schools 25 per cent (now only six and a quarter per cent) of a student's public school costs to lure them to provide parents with

advice and instructional materials.

Alberta funds parents directly if they choose to home-school.

Ontario, on the other hand, insists that homeschoolers register with a public school board, which is not obligated to assist them.

Not Scripture alone

The new Alliance policy states that while the Bible shows the family as the primary nurturer, the question of parents as educators "cannot be settled with scriptural references alone."

"Not likely to be available in the average home" are a disciplined learning environment, a socially interactive context, a variety of resources, and professional educators, the policy continues.

Staff who homeschool children without a special need that the school cannot serve could face demotion or even dismissal.

The policy describes but discourages a part-time arrangement in which a student remains enrolled and participates in certain classes for a minimum of 30 per cent of regular per student cost.

Alliance director Adrian Guldemond says that the main fear behind the controls is that a homeschooling family would sue the school if a student gets hurt in gym class or on a class trip — school activities most in demand by homeschooling parents.

New supervision program

New to the policy this time around is the SHIP program (Supervised Home Instruction Program). In that program a non-staff person (such as a former teacher) supervises no more than four children on a one-year contract and for no less than \$500.

Parents would have to prove that the main reason for homeschooling is financial and that they are serious about re-enrolling the child at a fixed date.

In a preface to the policy Guldemond stated that "the legal, political and economic realities in Ontario" keep Christian schools from being more helpful to homeschoolers, although he admitted in an interview that fees-for-service could make programs like SHIP self-supporting.

More time for extra projects, family

...continued from p.1

year teaching her six-year-old son at home.

The former teacher and member of Zion Christian Reformed Church of Oshawa, Ont., says the charge is ironic considering that they have been longtime members of the school and still support it financially.

Vicki Livingstone, founder of the 400-member Canadian Home Educators Association of B.C., says that relations between schools and homeschooling parents have improved in that province since provincial funding began.

But despite the funds, she says, some Christian schools "still feel a lot of resentment" that those children are not showing up for class each

morning with the children of other Christian parents.

McRae says that resentment is hard to understand. "Christian schools and homeschools each have their advantages and disadvantages. Why can't they work together and complement one another?" she asks.

Top advantage

Topping the list of homeschooling advantages is time, agree parents. Most of all, time for extra projects and hands-on experience.

"I'm able now to capitalize on Reuben's interests immediately," says McRae, who first considered homeschooling while a teacher at Langley Christian School in B.C.

When her son sparked an interest in farming last year,

McRae took him and three younger siblings to farms and farm auctions, sent away for farming videos, and helped him write and illustrate a book on farming. She also helped him set up a home-made incubator to hatch chicken eggs, which they later sold at a local market to teach business skills.

Homeschooling parents point out that home teaching automatically translates into more family time.

"If we weren't homeschooling, I'd probably be one of those mothers who wouldn't spend enough time with their kids," McRae admits, adding that being around each other 24 hours a day "can do nothing but good" for family relationships.

"A lot of mothers were telling me, 'It doesn't matter whether it is a Christian school or public school, I still don't have any time with my child,'" notes Livingstone, a Seventh-day Adventist.

Not social misfits

Parents say homeschooling takes away negative peer pressure. But they are quick to argue that that doesn't mean homeschooled children become social misfits.

Many homeschooled families band together for language classes and group outings. Most have their children volunteer in the community, as well.

The difference in these peer social situations is that parents are usually close by to super-

vise, says Livingstone. And that assures parents that they will be the primary role models for their children, she adds.

"Other children don't teach each other manners or train each other up in the Lord. All kids do is batter each other about and form cliques," asserts Livingstone.

When homeschooled children get together, parents will be present to teach them "how to get along in an adult, non-violent manner," she adds.

McRae admits that her son's socialization "is a concern that is always in the back of my mind."

But she says homeschooling provides room for more interaction instead of less. "My son can see people in the entire community as models at work during the day when other children are in school."

Join gym classes

McRae wants to be able to consult with Christian school teachers. She also wants her son to be allowed to join in on

the school's gym classes and assessment tests for a fraction of tuition costs. In exchange she would share the extra resources that she says homeschooling parents are able to buy with the money that would otherwise go toward tuition.

She denies that she is opting for a "smorgasbord" idea of learning because "education is holistic and those sections would not be inconsistent with the rest of my teaching program."

Christian schools should cooperate with homeschoolers for their own good, she adds. Most homeschooled students enter school at some point and "parents are likely to choose the school that has been helping them all along."

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Comment

PRESSREVIEW



Carl D. Tuyl

Hereabouts it got colder than a banker's heart in foreclosure. Even the snowman on the front lawn of a house on our street caught a cold. I feel a bit like a resident of Nunavut, our newest territory. The population of Nunavut is 22,000. Seventeen thousand five hundred of those are Inuit and 40 per cent of the population living in 26 communities is under the age of 15.

★ ★ ★

Our *Numero Uno*, all decked out in fancy duds, is doing the Europe thing. Pow-wow with England's Prime Minister, having dinner with France's President Mitterrand, and telling both the UN and NATO that there is no peace to keep in Bosnia and that, therefore, the 2,000 Canadian blue-helmet detachment might go home.

In Paris the Prime Minister was welcomed by our ambassador there, Benoit Bouchard, one of Monsieur's earlier cronies.

★ ★ ★

Speaking of ambassadors: President Clinton appointed a certain Mr. Dornbusch to the Dutch court. Because of his Dutch-sounding name you think? Or because Mr. Dornbusch contributed close to 300,000 smackeroos to the Clinton campaign?

★ ★ ★

Daniel Johnson has been sworn in as the Premier of Quebec. His cabinet, so far, is an abbreviated version of the Bourassa council. Mr. Johnson is not known for his ebullience. Dull as a rainy day, some call him.

★ ★ ★

In their effort to get their crooks, the RCMP pursued a smuggler's boat right into the harbour of the French island of St. Pierre. Oops! A minor

diplomatic commotion. It's a bit like the Chinese police chasing someone in Vancouver.

★ ★ ★

The most generous Canadians are Newfoundlanders, who in 1992, for the second year in a row, topped the list of charity supporters. This in spite of the fact that the official unemployment figure for that province stands at 20 per cent. The *St. John's Evening Telegram* even calculates that counting all the people who have stopped looking for work, the real figure is 63 per cent.

★ ★ ★

I did not watch CBC's Dieppe documentary. Watching stuff like that makes too many things go bang in my head. Another thing that went "bang" is the federal infrastructure booster shot. It will free \$27 million for a new congress centre in Quebec City. No bridges or roads to fix there?

★ ★ ★

Saskatchewan's deficit is about \$296 million, give or take a few nickels, and depending on who's counting. The provincial legislature will begin sawing away at that amount in its next session, which will begin Feb. 7.

★ ★ ★

The loser of the week is Russia's Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who runs off at the mouth like a waste disposal dump. Listening to that guy spout off is like getting a

headache on a noisy street.

Winner of the week is the city of Paris, which installed Braille buttons on traffic lights in the city. The terminal buttons change the traffic signal to red and then vibrate when it is safe for the blind person to cross the street.

This column will gladly receive nominations for losers and winners of the week. Successful nominations will be rewarded with an honorable mention.

★ ★ ★

This from the *Saturday Evening Post*: two young women were chatting about future husbands. "The man I marry," one said, "must be bright, colorful and entertaining. Yet I also want him to recognize my need for peace and quiet. And I want him to be up-to-date with current events."

"You don't want a husband," the other said, "what you want is a color TV."

And one more mathematics lesson in the course "What is a billion?" With one billion dollars in your pocket you could enter any car dealership, order top-of-the-line cars and you would wind up with some 36,000 vehicles. You'd be cramped for space, though. Of course, if those cars were Chryslers you would get them without ashtrays, which now have become options.

★ ★ ★

An international debate fraught with deep historical and moral questions is under

way about the preservation of the remains of the Auschwitz concentration camp. And every post-communistic central European country, still busy tearing down Lenin statues and renaming village squares, wants to become a member of NATO. President Clinton is urging caution.

★ ★ ★

Fifty years ago 30 per cent of Latin America's population lived in cities and 70 per cent in the countryside. Today that ratio is reversed, and the urbanization has led to increases in crime rates and prison populations. Riots in an overcrowded Venezuelan jail killed 106 prisoners.

★ ★ ★

Time magazine describes the difference between Mr. Clinton and his wife, Hillary, as follows: he can have a 10-minute meeting in two hours; and she can have a two-hour meeting in 10 minutes.

★ ★ ★

Everybody read, of course, about a clinic in Italy where women old enough to collect pensions are made pregnant. Well, France's conserva-

tive government is about to introduce legislation that would ban pregnancy for post-menopausal women.

★ ★ ★

Mexico's image in the world has suffered because of the Zapatista uprising. The Mexican army mopped up the last rebel-held territories.

★ ★ ★

The *Berlin Tagesspiegel* writes: "The wall is gone and the city is united, but other than that not much has changed, and that's the problem." Although the German cabinet decided to move the country's capital to Berlin, that decision has not yet been ratified by the parliament, where many members much rather would stay in squeaky-clean Bonn.

★ ★ ★

How cold was it here? I saw geese flying north for warmth, and a poodle quick-frozen to a fire hydrant — that's how cold it was.

Carl Tuyl is chaplaincy co-ordinator in Canada for the Christian Reformed Church and is a member of the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

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Editorial

Year of the family: two hearts under one roof

The year 1994 has been declared the International Year of the Family by the United Nations. Because of that I have a pamphlet from the Canada Committee for the International Year of the Child on my desk. The purpose of this committee and others elsewhere in the world is to promote the importance of families.

"Together, we will emphasize the function families perform as a financial, nurturing, protecting, educating and cultural unit," says the pamphlet.

To focus on families for a year is a good thing. We Christians have always prized families as God-given institutions to help carry out tasks in creation and further the coming of the Kingdom of God. Strong families build strong schools, churches, neighborhoods and nations, we believe. Families are the training ground for responsible adult living.

Not everyone sees families that way, of course.



A recent birth announcement in a Niagara area newspaper said that Ralph and Filomena "scored" a son weighing 7 lb. 7 oz. "A couch partner for Dad during Canadian/Dallas games." Somehow that picture does not bode well for the little tyke's calling to develop the creation and make God's Kingdom come.

A time for change?

The logo of the International Year of the Family is a heart sheltered by a roof, linked by another heart, "to symbolize life and love in a home where one finds warmth, caring, security, togetherness, tolerance and acceptance." It's a wonderful graphic. There is continuity of line and a feeling of protection; yet the house of the family is open to the outside. The brushstroke to the right suggests playfulness and being unfinished. All these things are part of healthy family living.

But the logo also suggests a painful irony to me. There is a hint of a fetus being carried in the heart. How safe is that fetus in today's family structure? I ask myself. And will the International Year of the Family Committee produce material that urges parents not to abort their unborn children?

One part of the pamphlet talks about school and family and how "there is a flow of values and attitudes that moves between home and school." Is this the beginning of the recognition that parents have the right to choose the kind of education they want for their children to guarantee that flow of continuity? Is this the crack in the wall private schools have been waiting for?

Will the UN sponsored material speak out against the morés and expectations of society that produce single-parent families, nuclear families and same-sex-parent families? Will it place abstinence before condoms when addressing the unmarried?

Indiscriminate celebration?

If an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* by Keri Sweetman is an indication of what the focus of the International Year of the Family will be, these issues will not be addressed from out of a worldview with ultimate standards. Sweetman writes:

"The traditional family — two parents in a lifelong union, two or three kids, one income-earner — is going the way of the dinosaur. The new Canadian family could be headed by a single woman or man, by a same-sex couple, by people who aren't married, or by spouses who used to be married to someone else. If there are two

parents, they are probably both working outside the home. There are fewer children or none at all. *And all those family types will be celebrated during this international year (italics mine).*"

Since the source of ideas provided for the commemoration of this year is the United Nations, with its tendency to emphasize things that unite people and minimize things that divide, we must expect that most of the material sent out under the logo will be strong on acceptance and compassion and weak on spiritual identity and moral restraint.

Celebrate family renewal

That's not to say that we should not welcome this emphasis on the family. There will be much that we can learn from the material to be sent out. We may assume that much will be written out of genuine concern for families as places where children can be safe and loved. There will be discussion of such topics as alcohol, drugs, violence, television, communication, authority and discipline. In many cases we may be able to adapt the material to our own purposes. And there will be opportunities, no doubt, for those who adhere to ultimate standards to let their voices be heard.

I suspect that Christian families, schools and perhaps even churches will want to focus on the International Year of the Family. By doing so the Christian community can give this year its own impetus and content. I hope that we will avoid a smug and comfortable analysis of what's wrong in the world and that instead we will reach out in practical ways to those who need the community of God's family.

As Christians we want to celebrate "obedient" family life (Let's not be afraid of the term "obedient." The biblical concept includes acceptance as well as holiness). At the same time we want to acknowledge that there is much brokenness, also in our families. But we don't celebrate that brokenness. Instead, we must surround each other with non-judgmental and helpful ways of rebuilding family structures according to creational and scriptural guidelines.

Looking at the United Nations logo again, I'm reminded of Psalm 91: "If you make the Most High your dwelling — even the Lord, who is my refuge — then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent."

That's a big hug of comfort for those whose families have not been places of refuge. A heart that shelters under the roof of the Almighty, linked by the heart of Christ, is safe for sure.

BW

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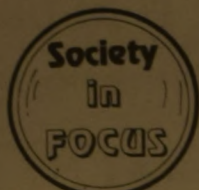
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Society/Letters



Jake Kuiken

The national dream: eliminating poverty?

In my last two columns I have been writing about two friends of mine, the first of whom is a single parent who was cut off welfare and told to go to work. As a result she can't afford the medication needed for a disability both she and her son experience. The other friend works in the "oil patch" and does very well. His family enjoys all the benefits of a very good income, including many tax benefits for what might well be considered personal expenses.

Welfare, as we generally understand it, is a provincial responsibility under the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments. However, for many years the federal government has been sharing in the expense of provincial welfare programs under the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP).

Cost-sharing was progressive

CAP was intended to simplify the patchwork of income security programs that existed in Canada before 1966. In the preamble to the legislation our federal parliament made a commitment to the entire nation: this legislation would be an instrument to eliminate poverty.

Not surprisingly, it was considered very progressive legislation at the time because of the cost-sharing feature, the range of services that could be wholly or partially shared, and the connection that was made between welfare programs and employment training.

Until a few years ago the federal government was prepared to share up to 50 per cent of most welfare costs incurred by provincial or municipal governments. There were no annual limits to the federal money available for sharing in the cost of provincial welfare services. Expenditures could rise and fall with changing employment patterns; higher levels of employment meant lower levels of federal and provincial welfare expenditures.

However, if you live in Ontario, Alberta or British Columbia, the Conservative federal government decided several years ago to limit the annual increases in its share of provincial welfare costs. Under Mulroney's leadership the government abandoned its historic commitment to the nation. The government singled out these three provinces for what can only be considered unfair national treatment, presumably because they were better off economically than the other provinces.

Each province has responded differently. Although it protested at first, Alberta seemed like it might disregard the loss of federal cost-sharing. However the last provincial government budget and Ralph's appointment of Mike Cardinal as the Minister of Alberta Family and Social Services, made it unmistakable that things were going to change.

Going better

Not only was the government going to stay within the federal cost-control limits, it would do better!

Mike Cardinal comes from northern Alberta where, many would argue, the impact of resource development has had a devastating impact on the traditional way of life of its Metis and aboriginal peoples. Cardinal and his current deputy minister, on the other hand, have both repeatedly blamed "the welfare system" for creating and fostering dependency.

In public neither of them appears to acknowledge that the welfare system was a solution, albeit inadequate, to the problems that followed the government's resource development policies. In fact, both now state the view that the welfare programs must be "active" instead of "passive."

What does that mean?

It means that my friend who was cut off welfare, and hundreds like her, are the benefactors of Mulroney's abandonment of a national goal and Mike Cardinal's "active" welfare policies.

Jake Kuiken is a registered social worker who lives and works in Calgary.

Mennega's articles were fair and historically correct

I would like to respond to Mr. Stehouwer's letter entitled "Mennega shows pro-Jewish, anti-Arab bias" (Dec. 3, 1993).

After reading Harry Mennega's articles on Jews and Arabs, I do not doubt that he's convinced that Jews have a right to the state of Israel. I would not, however, call this a "bias," which has an accusing connotation.

I find that Mennega showed dispassionately that the Jews have always wanted to live peaceably with the Arabs and have tried to implement this desire. Although he could have done so often, Mennega does not at all enumerate the violent reactions and resulting atrocities with which the Arabs rebutted Jewish intent, overtures and attempts. Instead he rejoiced at the recent attempts of both Palestinian Arabs and Jews to seek peaceful coexistence, and he showed cautious optimism about the possibility of achieving it.

This kind of writing does not, in my opinion, deserve the name of pro-Jewish or anti-Arab bias.

Muslim religion is intolerant

To write, as Mennega did, that the "Israelis, upon founding their state in 1948, were immediately attacked by five Arab states, and fought five wars against those who publicly proclaimed that their aim was 'the elimination of Zionism in Palestine'" (Palestinian National Covenant, art. 15) is not unfair or one-sided. It's historical truth.

I cannot but conclude that what pains Stehouwer is that Mennega does not share his conviction that Jews have no right to live in Palestine. Stehouwer concludes his letter with the conviction that two religions, Muslim and Jewish, cannot tolerate each other under the same

roof. If they were merely two races, possibly, but not two religions.

If that is the philosophy Stehouwer embraces, I must reply that his attitude is dangerous and detrimental to our Christian world and life view, as well as to democratic convictions. Secondly, by asserting this, he inadvertently puts the blame of intolerance not on the Jews but on the Muslims. History has shown again and again that Muslim Arabs have refused to acknowledge that Jews should have their own country. Besides, most Jews in Israel are not religious at all; many are avowed atheists.

Do Jews have a right?

The most important question which underlies all questions about peace in the Middle East seems to be: Do the Jews have a right to an ancestral home in Palestine? History shows that the present Arab states were given the right to become countries of their own after World War I. Yet Israel, which was then promised statehood too, did not receive it, although Jews have lived in the land occupied and ravaged by several Arab and Turkish forces for hundreds of years.

It is wonderful that there are peace overtures at present. But if a just peace is to come, the Muslims will have to change their principle of non-tolerance of other religions and assure the Jews their right to their state in Palestine.

We can and must pray to our Lord that this change may come about. For it is "not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty" (Zach. 4:6) that this peace can come about. Pray especially that both Arabs and Jews may turn to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Peter Sluys
Lacombe, Alta.

Wrong to print all of letter

Most publications reserve the right, and exercise it, to edit for purposes of clarification, space etc.

CC's literal quoting of Klaas Terpstra's elder's expletive, no doubt said in anger and frustration, adds nothing to his letter to the editor and lowers the standard of CC. I searched various authorities to see if there is a standard. *The Globe and Mail's Style Book*

does not mention the word neither does *Roget's Thesaurus*. Oxford Complete English Dictionary 1987 only says: "Not now in polite use."

CC would have done well to follow the same rule.
Happy 1994.

J. Hans Vander Stoep
Burlington, Ont.

The tie that binds

This year, the Lord willing, we'll celebrate 30 years of marriage, thanks to an ad in *Calvinist Contact*.

Times are hard, with unemployment and what not, but we could not bring

ourselves to cut out C.C.!

We wish you the Lord's continued blessing on your work.

Jake and Ria Wiersma
Trenton, Ont.

Letters/Sports

REFLEXION



John Byl

REFLEXION

'Gretzky' scores a dream goal

Wayne Gretzky received the puck from the goalie and glided up the ice. Traffic became congested and with a fake to the right, another to the left, past a defensive player, a tick through the legs of the next defenceman, and with a quick flip of the stick, the puck went past Mom who was playing goal (Dad had also been scored on).

As my face gets clipped by an overhanging branch on our backyard rink my daydream subsides; it was really one of my children playing ice hockey, getting a pass from a sibling who was playing goalie with a snow shovel (we don't have quite enough sticks for the whole family).

When I make the rink each year it is initially satisfying to watch this 10-metre, sort-of-square rink take shape. Careful flooding, a few hours of freezing, more flooding, more freezing, more flooding.... I probably sprinkle our lawn more often in winter than in summer! I not only get the satisfaction of seeing a finished project, but the hours of daydreaming, praying and reflecting as I stand outside in 10-20 degree below zero weather, are also therapeutic.

Eventually there is a rink that would make you dizzy if you tried to go in one direction a little too long. After a recent snowstorm the "boards" are now soft, one-and-a-half-metre high snow banks.

For the fun of it

We have no illusions of helping our children become great hockey players — using a snow shovel to teach a hockey player to become a goalie is probably not the wisest. And although it is exciting to watch those who have taken the time to play hockey well — just as it is enjoyable to listen to someone who has learned to play an instrument well, or to paint a beautiful painting — we are not inclined to invest the kind of time and money required to help our children pursue ice hockey careers.

Is an 80-game winter season plus summer hockey school appropriate for children? In Calgary's Minor Hockey Leagues they decided not, and are returning children's hockey to children. They have decided to: keep no league standings; have no competition for play off positions; have four divisions based on ability; limit travel; and limit games to a maximum of 50 per year.

Pursuing a well-rounded life

Even at higher levels this is happening. Recently I heard Sue Scherer speak; she was captain of the world gold medal-winning Canadian women's ice hockey team from 1990 and 1993. She coaches a university team and feels there is more to a university player's life than hockey. So if an occasional practice is missed on account of school pressures, that's all right.

Recently on TV I saw a three-year-old playing on a team of five-year-olds. He also has a backyard rink in the winter which is converted into an in-line skating rink in the summer so that he can learn to excel in this sport.

When Gretzky was asked if he wished his children would follow him in his career, he reportedly said that he "hoped not." We would do well to ask if our sport programs are helping children grow up as children.

John Byl teaches physical education at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.

Don't trivialize real pain

This is to Carl Tuyl in response to his comments in "Pressreview" (Dec. 24, 1993).

In one paragraph, you state an opinion on the reduction of the Canadian Forces and add that now "part timers," as you so quaintly called Reservists, will have to be sent to Bosnia. Then in the next paragraph you indicate that some of these soldiers that we are sending to Bosnia are experiencing psychological difficulties dealing with the situation there. Agreed.

You then proceed to use an analogy of your tonsillectomy as a child to indicate that these soldiers should just shut up and accept the fact that, hey, "we're all victims ... aren't we?"

Well, Sir, where were you in 1944 when Canadian "part timers" helped rid your country of an invader? Have you been to Bosnia? How can you with your Christian background be so concerned about Bosnian civilians or nationals who are shooting up their own country and then trivialize the pain suf-

fered by our sons and daughters who are sent to help them?

Victims of misunderstanding

Can you explain any hardship that you have ever had to face, knowing that the only reason you are there is to appease the international community? Can you explain to a young person why things like this happen in the world? And why they have to come to a country where the people's response to their anguish is either shut up (your response) or God has his reasons and we aren't supposed to know everything anyway (also a response I would expect from you).

Credentials

I am a Reservist with 10 years of experience and have served in the United Nations peacekeeping mission (UN-FICYP) that was used to stop a war (or contain it) started by religious fanatics who refused to allow other points of view to

exist (very similar to the Bosnian situation, with all of the associated complexities).

I am not a military nut. I have a degree in engineering and am at present in the process of obtaining a master's degree.

In my opinion, comments such as yours show a lack of compassion for situations that you do not completely understand.

Maybe this reply is a little strong for such a "little" statement as yours. However, I was brought up in the Christian Reformed Church, and opinions such as these are not restricted to abstract situations. The level of understanding of the world around the church and the general lack of real compassion for others in our own society who do not fit the CRC mold was endemic and showed to me that I could no longer be a part of this church.

A.J. Bergsma
Ottawa, Ont.

We see in part on women's issue

The complaint about "flawed arguments" (David Feddes, CC Dec. 17), which thanks to Canada Post I received on Jan. 5, also uses flawed arguments. No doubt this letter will, too, because we all see and know in part (1 Cor. 13:12).

Feddes' point that in Paul's days there were indeed women in religious leadership positions is correct. They were not only priestesses but also temple prostitutes. In order to uphold the honor of Christ in the church within the culture of the day, the worship practices of the church had to be clearly distinguished from those of the pagan temples. That being so, the prohibition against women in office was necessary.

Today, because of the culture we live in, we bring dishonor to the name of Christ if we discriminate against women by not having all the offices of the church open to all members.

Call for consistency

Why do we say that the command for women to keep their heads covered, etc. (1 Cor.

11:5) was temporary advice but not the command regarding church leadership? Or, to be consistent, would those opposed to women in office agree to having women praying and prophesying in worship if they wore a hat?

Paul does indeed appeal to creation and fall in the 1 Tim. 2:11-15 prohibition. But does verse 15 refer to redemption? The translations and interpretations of that verse vary considerably, depending on a person's point of view, internal agenda and background with which every one of us invariably comes to Scripture.

Change is resisted

Changes in the practices of the church have always been resisted by the kind of high-sounding arguments with which Feddes ends his letter. It began with resistance to the decision of the council in Jerusalem that gentiles did not need to be circumcised (Acts 15).

Yet in spite of resistance to changes, the Holy Spirit has always led the church forward, following the practice of our

Lord Jesus Christ who, through his angelic messengers, appointed women to be the first proclaimers of his resurrection.

Are we willing to believe today the promise made by Jesus that the Holy Spirit will lead you (plural in the Greek, indicating the church as body of believers) into the truth and trust that the conclusions of the deliberative assemblies of the church express that leading?

Granted, many church assemblies in the history of the church have made unbiblical decisions, but not when they listened as carefully to the Scriptures as the Christian Reformed Church synods have done on this issue, again and again and again.

Richard Druifhuis
Nanaimo, B.C.

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advertise your
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classified pages**

Cinema

Cinema summaries

Marian Van Til

Shadowlands

Major film about C.S. Lewis both hits and misses



Rated PG

Stars Anthony Hopkins, Debra Winger, Edward Hardwicke, Joseph Mazzello
Written by William Nicholson, based on his BBC teleplay
Directed by Richard Attenborough

Having much appreciation for the life and work of the great British Christian writer and scholar C.S. Lewis, I eagerly looked forward to this film. It is based on the unusual story of Lewis' marriage, at age 58, to Joy (Davidman) Gresham, a Jewish American divorcee whom he had gotten to know through intellectual discussions carried on via the mail.

There were many proven talents associated with *Shadowlands*: As "Jack" Lewis, Anthony Hopkins puts in yet another convincing performance; Debra Winger as Joy plays off him well; William Nicholson's original script for BBC-TV was well-written and moving, and he adapted that script for this film. And direc-

tor Richard Attenborough is known for his film epics (*Gandhi*, for example).

Yet I was skeptical. How would a film that is essentially a love story and obviously aimed at a mass audience deal with Lewis's Christianity — the motivating factor in his (and Joy's) life?

Not looking for love

Shadowlands presents Lewis as an extremely reserved Oxford don; a writer of children's books (the *Narnia Chronicles*) though he knew no children; a somewhat naive Christian a little out of step with his more worldly colleagues.

In reality he was broader than that, had a tremendous sense of humor and a great many friends. Lewis was an Oxford medievalist who was converted to Christianity while still a student at Oxford. He subsequently became one of the greatest apologists for Christianity in our century (he died in 1963 on the day JFK was shot). His *Chronicles of Narnia*, his popular works about the struggles of the Christian life, and his academic works are all still widely read.

A lifelong bachelor who shared a house with his only brother, also a bachelor, Lewis agreed to marry Joy Gresham — a legal relationship only — so that she and her two young sons could acquire the privileges of his citizenship and stay in Britain.

Joy was ill at the time, and financially strapped. Only shortly later did she find out she had an advanced case of cancer. Jack and Joy were remarried in a church-sanctioned ceremony in Joy's hospital room and he then took her

home to allow her to die a comfortable death.

But through a miracle she didn't die then. Her cancer went into remission, Lewis and Davidman acknowledged their love for each other, and lived, happier than either of them had ever been, for four years until Joy's death in 1960.

'The problem of pain'

Early in the film Lewis is shown lecturing on God's will and the "problem of pain" (the title of one of his books, though we're not told that).

Pain is, he says, "God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world." God uses suffering to jolt us out of complacency, to make us grow. But Lewis says these things (in the film) as an academic, not out of experience.

When he realizes he deeply loves Joy, and then must watch her suffer and die, his own words become hollow. He has a crisis of faith at her death, and that's where the film ends — as a young boy at the death of his mother, he had avoided pain; as a man at his wife's death, he embraces it, but it's not a comfort. He still believes in "heaven," but director Attenborough leaves him in the *Shadowlands*, outside of the warmth and radiance of the true Light.

The real-life Lewis, understandably, went through a terrible despondency at Joy's death, prompting spiritual questions. He wrote of his struggle in *A Grief Observed*, an experience which helped him deal with his grief. But he by no means abandoned his Christian faith.

While a film like this should be allowed some artistic license with its subject's life, it is unfortunate that it misleads viewers into believing that Lewis abandoned all certainty. (Faith, however virulent, seems to be viewed as a "pat answer" by most secular critics and filmmakers.)

In crisis, what happens to faith?

There are other facts that have been changed, some obviously for dramatic reasons: in life, Gresham was plain-looking, a published poet and a true intellectual and scholar; her razor-sharp mind was a match for Lewis's. Such a woman always seems to present problems for filmmakers. The film Gresham, while witty, is



C.S. Lewis on the cover of Time, Sept. 8, 1947.

pretty, less intellectually astute, and presented as only dabbling in poetry. She's much less fully drawn than is Lewis.

The reasons for other changes from reality seem obscure. Why do advertisements for the film avoid mentioning, for example, that it is based on the life of C.S. Lewis? Some of those changes (i.e., the presentation of his faith) are relevant to judging the film. Others are not.

Judged solely on what is in the film, it is a genuine tear-jerker: sentimental but not maudlin. It has many satisfying moments, some exquisitely so.

The setting at Magdalen College, Oxford, is about as beautiful as a human-made setting can get; the music is ethereal; there are many moments of gentle humor; the acting is excellent; it does raise some moral/theological questions which may lead to lively discussion; and Richard Attenborough generally resists the temptation to turn the story into an overblown epic.

One service this film will undoubtedly provide is to compel some viewers previously unaware of C.S. Lewis to become familiar with his writings. And that's a good service indeed.



Joy Lewis around 1957

Church, Marian Van Til, page editor

CRWRC literacy program graduate pens first thank you note



PHOTO: CRWRC

Last year in the Dominican Republic alone, CRWRC trained 44 volunteer literacy teachers and enrolled in literacy classes 660 adults who could not read or write.

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRWRC) — Lwi Matin, a recent graduate of a Christian Reformed World Relief Committee literacy program in the Dominican Republic, was so thankful for his new skills that he penned a letter — one of his first. Lwi's letter begins: "I once doubted your

promise that I would write and read, but when I prayed to my Lord Jesus Christ, he showed me that this program was from God."

Matin describes his illiteracy as a time of darkness when he could see nothing. He exclaims, "But now I have a change in my life!"

He continues: "I did not think that the person writing this letter would be able to read and write. But now I can say thank you Jesus for the literacy group. Because of it, I now can read a psalm."

Lwi Matin is just one of hundreds of needy Dominicans who gain literacy skills through

CRWRC programs each year. Last year in the Dominican Republic alone, CRWRC trained 44 volunteer teachers and enrolled 660 adults who could not read or write. CRWRC staff member Caspar Geisterfer exclaims, "Never before have we started so many new participants at one time. We feel very blessed."

Literacy skills provide people in poverty with opportunities they did not possess before. CRWRC director Ray Elgersma explains that literacy is often the first step needy people take in achieving self-sufficiency. He explains,

"Literacy opens doors that were closed before. People have the opportunity to become involved in the marketplace and to further develop their skills through educational programs. Literacy enables them to protect themselves against abuse by employers and landlords. Being able to read and write provides self-confidence and the hope that one can change one's future. Above all, many people first come to know the Gospel message when they are able to read it themselves for the first time."

Chained monk skeleton is an archaeological first

JERUSALEM, Israel (Christians and Israel) — The *Jerusalem Post* reports that the skeleton of a Byzantine monk, found fettered in a 13-pound iron chain, was presented recently by the Israel Antiquities Authority to the Mar Elias Greek Orthodox Monastery, on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem — adjacent to the excavation at which it was found.

Displayed in a glass case in the position in which it was found, the skeleton was placed in the recently refurbished monastery-church, where it is to remain on public view.

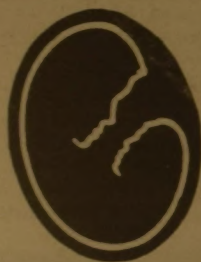
According to Dr. Vassilios Tzaferis, director of Christian

archaeology for the Antiquities Authority, this is the first time that human remains have been found in this manner. "We knew of practices in which monks would perform such acts of self-castigation, but this is the first time anyone has ever found concrete evidence of them," Tzaferis said.

'Historic occasion'

In addition to the skeleton, archaeologists found the remains of an earlier monastery and church, dating from the fifth century. From potsherds found nearby, Tzaferis said, it appears that the skeleton is from the sixth century, shortly after the original monastery was founded.

Greek Orthodox patriarch Diodoros I thanked the Antiquities Authority for returning this unique skeleton. He said it was a historic occasion, since the bones provided evidence of the monks who had lived in this land for centuries.



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Church

Witnessing through adversity

The city of Hamilton, Ont., has been experiencing a distressing series of fires attributed to the work of arsonists. The rash of fires began last summer, with as many as 50 fires being attributed to a single person. These fires, which were first set in trash in alley ways in the east-central region of the city, have steadily escalated to the burning of garages and rear porches.

To illustrate the risk, the most recent fire damaged three adjacent row houses, caused \$250,000 in damage and hospitalized a 12-year-old girl with smoke inhalation. Because the fires have been set during the night, the risk of fatalities is disturbing.

Churches the target

As if that were not enough, another arsonist, believed unrelated to the first one, is also at work in the city. The target of

this person's activities is churches.

Three major church fires within the same general neighborhood since mid-December have caused almost one million dollars in damages. Two of those fires have clearly been identified as the work of an arsonist and the third is of suspicious origin. The past months have also seen a high number of churches victimized by theft and vandalism.

The vulnerability of church buildings is obvious and protecting them is a major concern. Congregations are understandably anxious to take whatever steps they can to protect their facilities.

These events are much on my mind because the congregation in which I am the pastor is in the immediate area in which the church fires have occurred.

However, in the midst of this concern there is a need to maintain a balanced perspec-

tive. Two thoughts about this capture my mind.

First, every fire involves risk to human life; if not to building occupants, then to those firefighters who are dispatched to deal with the blaze. However, there is a greater risk when dwellings occupied by sleeping tenants are set on fire. It's quite possible that a continued series of residence fires will inevitably lead to a fatality.

While we who are members of Christian congregations have a legitimate concern for our buildings, we must not lose our Christian perspective. Our concerns for this threat in our community must always put the risk to human life ahead of the possible loss of a building, however treasured that building may be.

Second, I must say that the testimony of the people of the Mount Hamilton Baptist Congregation who suffered an estimated half-million dollar loss



A Presbyterian Comments

Robert J. Bernhardt

when their sanctuary was gutted by fire just one week before Christmas has had a compelling impact upon me.

Strong witness

I have at first hand observed that after initial and only momentary shock at their loss, this congregation has quickly regrouped to go on with its worship and service. Their visible demonstration that the church is not about buildings but about people is a powerful witness. I have no reason to doubt that the other congregations who have suffered recent losses are reflecting a similar perspective.

Perhaps, in the mysterious providence of God, these events will make the genuineness of the church's values and perspectives more visible in the world than have many years of active, "normal" congregational presence in the community.

Once again God gives us the opportunity to believe and experience the promise that "in all things God works for the good of those who love Him" (Rom. 8:28).

Robert Bernhardt is pastor of Chalmers Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, Ont.

Vietnam government petitioned to reopen three churches

Andrew Wark

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam (NNI)—Church officials from the government-sanctioned Evangelical Church of Vietnam (ECVN) have petitioned for the reopening of three prominent Protestant churches in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) that were closed by the country's socialist government.

Although the Ho Chi Minh

City People's Committee (the local administrative wing of the Vietnamese Communist Party) has yet to respond to the application, ECVN sources are optimistic that the government will react favorably to the request.

The Tran Cao Van Church, one of southern Vietnam's most renowned ECVN churches, was closed by authorities in 1983, apparently due to the rapid

growth of its membership. The church had burgeoned from 29 members in 1975 to an estimated 5,000 members in 1983.

Just prior to its closure, the church's leaders, Pastors Ho Hieu Ha and Nguyen Huu Cuong, were arrested and incarcerated by authorities. The two pastors were finally released from prison in 1990, after they agreed to leave Vietnam and

resettle in the United States.

The Anh Dong Church was closed in 1984, reportedly after the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) became alarmed at its rate of growth.

The French Church, located close to what was formerly the South Vietnamese Presidential Palace in District One, was closed in 1975, following North Vietnam's victory over South Vietnam. Prior to its closure, the church was administered by French clergy, with a predominantly French-speaking expatriate congregation.

According to sources, the

French government has also recently petitioned the VCP to permit the French Church to reopen under ECVN administration, as a sign of goodwill between the two countries.

The Vietnamese government, eager to bring an end to the 18-year-old international trade embargo against the country, has gradually softened its attitude toward religion since 1992. However, while Vietnam's Christians have welcomed the party's modicum of change, sources claim the status of 284 ECVN churches closed in 1975 by government action remains unchanged.

You can help alleviate hunger at home

AKRON, Pa. (MCC)—The international Christian aid agency Bread for the World suggests the following ideas for individuals wanting to learn more about hunger and respond to hungry people:

- * Get to know a hungry or poor person on a personal basis;
- * Reduce consumption to share with people in need;
- * Study the Scriptures on hunger/poverty and teach a class on the subject;
- * Take food to a community party, or volunteer to help at a soup kitchen or pantry;
- * Study hunger policy, and write letters to editors and/or to

legislators on hunger issues.

For more information about domestic hunger and ways to respond, order "Domestic Needs Packet." The packet sells for \$4 Cdn. To order

copies contact MCC Canada, 134 Plaza Drive, Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9, phone (204) 261-6381; or the MCC office nearest you.

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STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

The Student Fund Committee of Classis Huron of the Christian Reformed Church invites applications for student financial aid in preparation for the ordained ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. Applications must be in before March 15, 1994. Contact:

Rev. Nathan Elgersma
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Features

Gertie Pool

One autumn day I watched my three-year-old grandson manoeuvre a Super Nintendo machine with the greatest of ease. Playing an innocent child game made his little mind zoom off into the land of make-believe for the next half hour.

When I tried to play his game I failed miserably. A strange kind of feeling crept inside of me: why should this little fellow know so much more about this electronic wonder than a person 50 years his senior?

With my curiosity set on edge, I began to search out the workings of the intriguing world of high-tech electronics.

And learn I did! There are many good things happening out there. But some bone-chilling facts haven't left me and I feel compelled to share them with you.

The first lesson I learned was how America's telemedia giants (Hollywood, AT&T, Paramount-Viacom, Time Warner and Tele-Communications Inc.) have all spent billions of dollars to create a two-way information highway able to present movies, sitcoms, news on demand and video games.

More study showed how advanced technology creates sophisticated tools with unimaginable possibilities. The fibre optic cable for instance, consisting of a bundle of thin fibres enclosed in a tube, can transmit limitless amounts of data around the world at nearly the speed of light. All this is accomplished by placing one end of the cable at a light source and the other end in front of a camera lens.

I learned how digital compression schemes can concentrate the complete contents of *Encyclopedia Britannica* on a small silver disk (compact-disk) and how high-speed computer graphics chips can beam millions of bright colors on a screen within a fraction of a second.

Another spinoff effect comes by purchasing a modem for your computer, plus proper software. Then you, too, will be able to tap into the interactive global information highway, ask for and receive information for research projects, and whiz data around the world within a matter of minutes.

That is just the beginning. Just around the corner lies the awe-inspiring video conferencing. By dialing a telephone number interfacing

Journey into the electronic boom



with a computer, you soon will be able to see and talk to people anywhere in the world. This method will make it completely possible for the physically disabled and others to get a university degree without ever setting foot on campus.

So far, all things looked bright and wonderful. But the next phase of my journey gave me a rude awakening when I discovered how the so-called "kid-stuff" entertainment becomes the prime target of a powerful, big-time, money-making industry.

All of a sudden the grown-up world is hurled into the middle of a global video-game mania, with game-crazed audiences shouting for more bloody scenes.

This vid-game phenomenon is a big and lucrative industry today. In America alone it rakes in \$400 million more than what the public spends going to the movies. A single video hit sold around the globe nets the industry at least \$500 million.

The rapidly evolving electronic explosion finds law makers falling behind the high-tech boom.

Just what is in the boom windfall? Anyone interested might want to read an article in *Time* (Sept. 27, 1993) called "Attack of the Video Games."

Among other things, the article will tell you about one of the most popular kid's games today called "Mortal Combat." Hero Johnny Cage kills with a decapitating uppercut; friend Cano rips out a still-beating heart and Sub-Zero tears a head off and holds it up in victory. Do you wonder why violent crimes are on the increase?

Nonetheless, I had an awful hard time believing all of this. So I went to investigate. At a local video game store I picked out a game called "Streets of Rage" that was placed in the children's Nintendo section.

The vid-jacket described the game as follows: "Axell and Blaze slam asphalt with bigger, better, totally devastating attacks! Skull-crushing ex-wrestler Max Thunder joins with earth shattering body slams and spinning fist attacks. Skate slices punks with high-speed, in-line skate attacks and spinning jump kicks. Go Mania! with jam shattering, bone-busting punching, head cracking jump-kicks and secret weapons. Gangs of dirt bikers dive into you from every side. Smash'em with a pipe as they speed by."

While I tried to digest the real intent of the game a couple of 12-year-old fellows stopped by. They made careful observa-

tion as to which of the 30-odd vid-games would present the bloodiest scenes. They rented the "Mortal Combat" version.

Intending to rent a Super Nintendo machine, I asked the clerk if it was hard to operate one of them. She replied, "If children can operate the machines, you should be able to learn. Get the new Sega machine, it brings out the color much better. In the blood scenes, even the blood looks brighter," said the young girl with a sweet smile.

I needed no further explanation. I turned around and went home with no machine and deeply saddened. What could I do?

For me there is not a shred of doubt that the electronic ball and the fat benefits are in the hands of the video-game designers and the follow-up retail outlets.

The adult video game stores and the newly developed adult computer bulletin board services, used with high-tech operating tools of PC micro computers, modems, CD-players and sophisticated laser printers, reap instant wind-fall.

Foxy operators have a most cunning way to divide one's attention. The Connection BBC and adult bulletin service supplies commendable aid in access to a digital world of

computer programs, medical advice and match-making. But their profits soar sky-high by showing colorful pornographic photos and x-rated stories.

In the beginning stages of a rapidly evolving world of video games, astute marketing agents carefully calculate the buyer's mood. They want to know what the public wants to see, what games they want to play and why. But more important to them is how much viewers are willing to pay.

All is not gloom and doom, either, in this business. Far from it! The Monopoly videogame and others are good fun. Disney/MGM recently released a video game version of "Aladdin," one of the more beautiful films ever made. These colorful hand-drawn characters by Disney's studio artists helps the video game move toward wholesome family entertainment.

This branch of production is fighting hard to draw a profitable share from the interactive information highway.

Today, the video game business has slipped completely out of hand. A few production companies have tried to stem the tide by placing a so-called gore-code, making it harder for younger children to get into the bloodier parts of the videos. Only older players are told how to gain entry into restricted parts.

But a giant loophole for young players is already in place because of published access codes. So much for that noble intent!

So what's a person to do?

I would suggest we unmuzzle our mouths and shout off the rooftops that we don't want this filth which is slowly eroding any sense of family, safety, morality and innocence. We want good, wholesome, character-building material.

We also need to take a decisive stand where it really counts. In a two-minute exchange at the cash register the lone purchaser becomes a giant decision maker for video game producers.

The next time I watched my little grandson play his Nintendo game, anguish gripped my heart. A silent prayer arose from within me: "Lord, send your guardian angels to guide and protect these, your little ones."

Gertie Pool is a nursing assistant and lives in Abbotsford, B.C.

Central America

Aid that works in

Jim Romahn

Canadian aid projects are working in Costa Rica and Honduras.

One of Canada's main projects is a telephone communications system ideally suited to the mountainous regions of Honduras and Costa Rica because it works on microwaves instead of wiring. The technology was developed for remote communities in the Canadian North, but it works equally well in the mountains of Central America. The result is cheap, reliable and clear communications, a benefit that's hard to capture in either words or dollars for villages that used to count life-and-death communications in days and now can call for help in seconds.

There are, of course, lots of examples of aid projects that have not worked, including a few that have done more harm than good. But the disasters have been relatively few and far between, thanks to a blend of expertise among the civil servants who work for the Canadian International Development Agency and their patience in working alongside the local people.

Dollar for dollar, it's the small-scale church programs that are by far the most effective. The village of Buenos Aires, 60 hovels hugging a mountainside about 15 km from the northern border of Honduras, is a perfect example.

Ovidio Flores, a seasoned aid specialist for the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), made first contact with the villagers about eight months ago when he learned about their struggle to establish ownership over a stream claimed by a wealthy neighbor. Flores listened to their concerns and learned about their hopes and dreams.

High on their list of priorities is developing a better water system. Government officials in the far-away capital of Tegucigalpa promised money and materials, but nothing materialized over more than a year of waiting.

Flores and MCC, backed with some funding from the

Christian Reformed Churches of Canada and the U.S., have provided bricks, concrete, reinforced rods, piping, picks and shovels. The farmers have organized work crews to dig the reservoir and a two-foot-deep ditch stretching more than one kilometre across a mountainside of brick-hard clay and boulders.

Priorities

The villagers are well organized. They have several committees, each with a list of projects and priorities. For example, a women's committee will soon organize village meetings to learn

how to improve health and nutrition standards; there are experts available to teach, but villages have to be ready, willing and organized to receive the teachers. Another objective is to improve the road — using the same picks and shovels provided for the water project.

Dr. Elias Sanchez has transformed a mountainside farm near Tegucigalpa, converting a steep and near-barren slope into a rich garden. Sanchez, who quit his government job

MCC heifer project at Cuatro Cruces, Costa Rica. Gregorio Lopez, pastor-farmer, is at left in white shirt.



The farmers have organized work crews to dig the reservoir and a two-foot deep ditch stretching more than one kilometre across a mountainside of brick-hard clay and boulders.

ing, composting and terracing. He's confident it will work and, when it does, the peasants will ask for his help without his having to offer.

Listening carefully

This is how an aid agency must work: keeping ears open to find communities that have needs. Experience has taught aid and development workers that projects flop if outsiders arrive, bestow their advice and goodies, then leave. When they listen first, then respond cautiously and carefully, there's an excellent chance that progress will take root and flourish.

For example, Riverto Lopez of Siguatepeque, Honduras, said neighbors laughed when he first began pursuing the back-breaking organic approach of hoeing and mulching weeds and hacking out terraces instead of the popular, quick and easy way — slashing brush with a machete and burning hillsides clean. But within three crops, planted and harvested within the space of one year, they stopped laughing and began asking questions because he was spending less on fertilizers and pesticides and was reaping larger harvests of

corn and beans. It's now 15 years since Riverto first learned these techniques from Presbyterians working under the World Neighbors program. He has expanded his fields roughly five-fold and is earning enough to provide secondary school education for his two sons and three daughters.

Or take the example of a church at Cuatro Cruces, Costa Rica. Cows are so expensive they were far beyond the financial reach of the villagers. A Mennonite congregation at Tavistock responded with enough money to buy seven heifers. The campesinos at Cuatro Cruces spread those heifers among the seven neediest families in the area, with needy defined in terms of babies and young children that needed milk.

Those who got the original heifers paid back by raising and donating two one-year-old calves. The local Mennonite leaders have given those year-old heifers to others who, in turn, are paying by giving back a one-year-old heifer. If male calves are born, they're sold and the proceeds are used to buy a heifer. The original seven heifers have become 51 spread across three congregations. And most of the heifers have been distributed to peasants who are not Mennonites.

A way out of poverty

Considering that one mature cow recently sold for six times the cost of a typical 20-hectare farm, this project has not only improved nutrition for hundreds of children, but also provided dozens of peasants an opportunity to dig their way out of poverty.

The bad news in Central America is numbing — poverty, malnutrition, pollution and disease. But the good news is that Canadian aid has an excellent track record and our help is making a noticeable difference. And the churches are doing some of the best work with some of the poorest of the poor.

Jim Romahn is a journalist who lives in Kitchener, Ont. He is currently working on Central American aid projects for the Mennonite Central Committee.

PHOTOS: JIM ROMAHN
CRWRC and MCC are jointly donating the brick and cement for this water project at Buenos Aires, Honduras.

Feature

The aftermath

Didy Prinzen

Joan sat straight up in bed and wiped her face with the bed sheet. Every night since she had been home she had gone through agony! She wondered if it would ever stop.

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed. The song still went through Joan's head repeatedly. She had thought it would go away after Christmas, but it hadn't.

It hadn't really hit her until she had come home for the holidays. She had entered the room where her dolls still spoke of the days when she had been an innocent young girl, and suddenly she had experienced the weight of her deed with a force she had not imagined possible. Nothing would ever be the same again.

Joan remembered standing in the doorway for a minute. Her mother, behind her, had said, "Isn't it nice to be back in your own room?" Showing a cheerfulness she did not feel she had replied, "It sure is, Mom!" Little did her mother know that she wasn't the same person who had lived in that room.

Since then, "Away in a Manger," her favorite Christmas carol when she was very young, had come to accuse her. It played over and over in her mind. God was punishing her now, she was almost sure. He was not going to let her get away with it. She thought she had, because nobody knew. All along she had felt that there was no other way. She could never have gone home to Mother, who had such high expectations of her! If he had been a guy who had loved her, supported her, maybe she could have overcome her fear. But not alone...

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed... She moaned softly, and felt perspiration breaking out again. She would get up and take one of the pills the doctor had prescribed for her. Maybe that would put her to sleep. He had said to take them only in case of an emergency;

but this was an emergency.

Joan let herself slide out of bed and saw the contours of her purse on the chair. She rummaged through it, panicking at the thought that she might not be able to find the pills. But then her groping fingers touched the little bottle and with a sigh of relief she clung to it as though it were a life buoy. Peeking around the corner she noticed that Mother's door was partly open. She cautiously tiptoed across

in there. It could be Joan. Helen switched on the light. "What are you doing here in the dark, Joan? Why don't you turn the light on?" she asked.

Helen was startled when she saw Joan's face. Joan looked terrified, ashen-faced. Her one hand held tightly to what looked like a small bottle.

A deep fear gripped Helen's throat. Something was seriously wrong. She instinctively fought to stay calm.

"Come on, girl," she said,

anxiously she took one of her hands. It felt lifeless and it was so cold! She stroked and stroked it.

After a long while she felt some of the rigidity leave her daughter. And fervently she prayed, "Please, Lord, let her tell me. Whatever it is!"

However, Helen was not prepared for what she was to hear... With a monotonous voice, void of all feeling, Joan began to tell the story of a pregnancy and an abortion — hers

but of having been able to do away with the baby.

When Joan finally stopped talking, Helen's main feeling was pity, deep and overwhelming; pity for her child who had gone through such an awful ordeal — alone.

Joan would have to bear the consequences for her deed her life long. Already she found herself begging the Lord for forgiveness on Joan's behalf. But she herself was guilty too! She had clearly detected in Joan's story the desire to spare her, not to disappoint her.

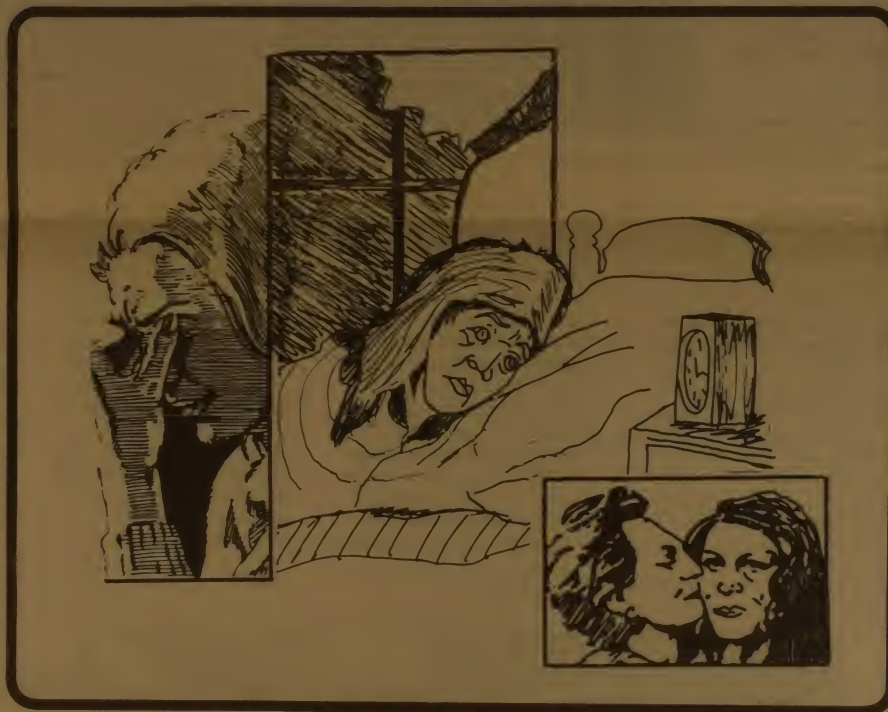
But Joan started to talk once more. Her voice sounded more normal now, but so very sad. "And, Mom," she said, "ever since I came home I have heard 'Away in a manger' singing in my head. I can't sleep. All I can think of is my baby for whom there really was no room..."

Helen's heart seem to break. She pulled her daughter into her arms and, lying in the bed, held her close and wept. She felt the dam of Joan's emotions break as well. They clung to each other as if they had to save each other. And while their tears mingled they seemed to be drowning together in an abyss of grief.

How long they had held each other and cried Joan did not know, but after a while she found

herself spent, completely exhausted. At the same time, however, she discovered a stillness within herself, as after a storm. Yet she seemed to feel nothing. At the same time she detected a flicker of hope in her heart: now her grief and guilt had been poured out, maybe there could be room for a new beginning...

She felt her mother's embrace and knew that her mother would be there right beside her.



the hall to the bathroom but did not turn on the light.

Joan stood listening for a few minutes. She reached for the glass but, in the dark, misjudged the distance and it crashed to the floor. She froze.

Helen woke from a sound that came from the bathroom. She waited a minute then slipped out of bed and walked to the bathroom. It was dark, which was strange because someone seemed to be

"You should go back to bed, right?" Joan didn't move. Helen then calmly took her by the hand, led her back to her room and sat down on the edge of the bed with her. Without any resistance, almost like a little child, Joan had followed her. "Now, please tell me what's wrong," Helen said.

Joan did not speak. Helen put her arms around her daughter, and felt the young woman holding herself rigid. What was wrong?

Thoughts raced through Helen's mind. She knew that she had to get Joan to talk. In-

Joan talked for a long time, including every detail. Helen felt waves of emotions wash over her: anger, at the man who had done this to her daughter and shock at Joan getting an abortion without first coming to her.

Guilt suddenly flared within her. Had Joan truly been afraid to ask her for help? She cringed at her daughter's pain. And she found herself still unable to comprehend the fact that Joan had committed such a horrible act. No, not the one of becoming pregnant — that seemed insignificant now —

Didy Prinzen is a freelance writer who lives in Whitby, Ont.

Environment



Our place and task in the environment

John Wood

Pete's pond

Have you ever wished that someone would just do something about the sad state of the environment, not just talk about it?

Let me tell you about Peter Duda, a friend of mine. Pete works for Chevron USA, one of the major players in the petroleum game and (often justifiably) a perennial bad guy for Greenpeace and other environmentalists.

If you look in the *National Geographic's* Oct. 1993 special edition on water quality, you will see a brief mention of "Pete's pond" at the oil refinery in Richmond, Calif.

Pete isn't a typical hero. He's nondescript, unassuming. He finds something that needs doing, thinks about it a bit, suggests a better way to do it and gets things done.

Pete has been the water quality supervisor at Chevron for a decade or so. He was put in charge of seeing that the refinery meet an increasingly stringent set of pollution guidelines. Chevron has been dumping waste water into San Francisco Bay since the 1920s. But stricter standards came into place and a reluctant industry had to scramble to meet them.

Pete said he could do a better job and, in a year, did so. Soon the water leaving the waste treatment pipe was of higher quality than the city drinking water coming into the refinery. Not bad, but the water quality standards kept moving up and environmental groups were pushing for a long, deep-water out-let pipe. The discovery in waterfowl of toxic trace metals like selenium posed a new problem.

Pete did some extra reading, went to a conference, asked the right questions and suggested that a marsh be created as a final filter for the waste water. Pete's system has been in place for five years and evidence shows it works well.

Steward of the marsh

So what is the point? Pete has done all of this for motives that depart considerably from the corporate bottom line. He knows that senior managers are not primarily interested in a healthy marsh or in saving an endangered clapper rail population. They are interested in meeting the regulations for doing business, getting on with refining oil, and making money.

But Pete is not the prototypical environmentalist either. His decidedly conservative politics and theology put him in a camp with strange bedfellows. He doesn't use environmentalist lingo. But does express a deep concern for the quality of the part of creation that he has gotten to know.

He is a self-appointed steward of the marsh. He wouldn't call himself that, but he is. He has found a corner of creation that is struggling to praise its Creator, and with hard work, good ideas, boundless energy, and grace, he has helped it to once again declare its Maker's praise.

That, unfortunately, isn't the point Chevron is trying to make. But caring for creation, doing what is right and not just expedient, Pete has brought some blessings of a fruitful creation to his corporation. The Creator is subtle and constrains himself beyond our capacity to appreciate. He lets good and evil strive together, mixed in a brew that confounds us, mostly.

John Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

Guelph researchers hope to make ginseng farming in Canada more effective

GUELPH, Ont. (Canadian Scene) — Few people know that Canada now equals the United States as the world's third largest producer of ginseng (after Korea and China). Ontario grows more than any other province, harvesting 300,000 kilograms a year.

Two University of Guelph scientists are making an intensive study of ginseng, widely publicized as a "wonder root." Horticultural scientist John Proctor and food scientist Yukio Kakuda are collaborating to study the hormones that give the ginseng root its unique

characteristics. These hormones are claimed to have numerous benefits, such as the reduction of stress, enhanced athletic performance, endurance, immunity from disease and increased sexual activity.

Researchers at the University of Alberta are studying the hormones' beneficial effect on memory loss associated with Alzheimer's disease.

In Ontario, ginseng has been commercially produced for more than 20 years, most recently as a replacement crop for tobacco. However, ginseng

is not easy to grow and takes up to six years to bring to maturity. Proctor is examining each stage of the growing process in an effort to help ginseng farmers make their efforts more cost effective. The six-year process now costs farmers more than \$600,000 per acre.

Proctor and Kakuda are working with the Ginseng Research Foundation to study the effectiveness of products on the market, such as ginseng tablets, which are monitored under the Canadian Food and Drug Act.

Smoking even herbal cigarettes ill-advised says foundation

TORONTO, (Canadian Scene) — The Addiction Research Foundation, an agency of the province of Ontario, has released an advisory to the public about the problems associated with tobaccoless cigarettes now on the market.

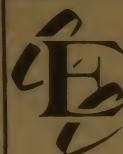
"The public may be left with the perception that herbal cigarettes are a healthy alternative to regular tobacco cigarettes, Nicotine, the substance we usually think of in relation to smoking, is addictive, but the inhalation of tar and carbon monoxide from burning material poses the greatest danger to one's health. That is why any form of smoking is ill advised," says the foundation.

"Since a package of herbal cigarettes sells for about \$3, its price may attract young people and could lead to the use of tobacco cigarettes in the future."

"Herbal cigarettes are not covered by the Food and Drug

Act nor are they covered under tobacco legislation which restricts sales to minors. There is little known about their effects except that there is danger in inhaling toxic substances.

Manufacturer claims — that smoking of herbal cigarettes may help people to quit or reduce consumption of regular cigarettes — are unproven," the advisory concludes.



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Advice/News



Peter and Marja are



Dear Readers:

In the last couple of months we've had a half dozen conversations with people who are struggling with the issue of God's will in the face of some very painful experiences. These persons have told us that others have tried to comfort them with "pat answers" about God's plan for their lives. The suggestion that God is responsible for their heartaches has left them confused and upset. They are angry at those who tell them that their difficulties are all God's will. On top of that, they find it impossible to pray. If God is doing this to me, they feel, how can he be there for me?

Today's column is a candid kick at the confessional can from which this theological confusion about God's will has come. We were not able to meet as committee to discuss this matter. So this comes as a solo effort from Peter and Marja.

Dear Strugglers With God's Will:

Lord's Day 9 and 10 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* happily proclaim the providence of God and celebrate his fatherly hand. What a comforting thought! Yet Lord's Day 9 also states that "he will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends me in this world," while the next Lord's Day professes that "all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but from his fatherly hand." We have a hard time appreciating the catechism's stated belief that drought, lean years, sickness, poverty and all adverse things are sent to us by God.

This teaching has had a painful application in our Reformed community. Well-meaning Christians have used this deeply discomfiting theology in their attempts to comfort hurting family members and friends. In hospital rooms, at accident sites, in conflict-torn homes and in funeral homes they will say that it's all God's will. Since this adversity is part of God's plan we need only to trust and obey. God is up to a greater good!

What such people don't realize is that this kind of theology turns our helper into our enemy. As we noted above, many people will no longer turn to the Lord in their trouble because this kind of theology leads them to conclude that God is their adversary. It's no wonder that they can't pray anymore. Would you turn to the one who willed your niece to be killed by a drunken driver? Would you cry

out to the one who willed your child to be born with a handicap? Would you reach for the one who willed your business to fail and go into bankruptcy? Would you ask for help from the one who willed the cancer to spread, the airplane to crash and the war to escalate? Would you pray to whomever willed whatever suffering has wounded you so deeply?

The truth is that multiple sclerosis, traffic accidents, AIDS, murdered teenagers, unemployment, family breakdown and all the other hurts that cripple our lives are *not* the will of God because he is not the author of evil. All of these things are a result of sin. They are our responsibilities and Satan's possibilities. When such adversities happen to us, God hurts with us, cries with us and stands with us. He is with us and for us against such things. In these things he still works for the good. But don't blithely say that he sends us all adversity. What he has sent is a Savior!

When people are suffering they need the Lord to help; they do not need a God to blame for all their misery. How unfortunate that a beloved confession like the *Heidelberg Catechism* and memorably moving questions and answers like the ones in Lord's Days 9 and 10 unwittingly turn our heavenly father into our foe.

The Apostle Paul carefully told us "to give thanks in all circumstances," not for all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:18). There's a world of difference between those two prepositions!

If Olevianus and Ursinus, the sixteenth-century writers of the catechism had caught that difference they might have put things somewhat differently in Lord's Day 9 and confessed instead that "he will turn to my good whatever adversity *harms* me in this sad world."

In the next question and answer they might have written that "in all things we can learn, not on chance, but on his fatherly hand." Putting it that way would have saved those of us who are suffering a lot of unnecessary grief and misplaced anger.

Write to: P & M

c/o Christian Courier

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Peter and Marja Niefsma are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Ludema, Tom Zeyl, Irene Boon, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

Building institutions is our task, says principal

Irene Boon

OSHAWA, Ont. — The principal of Immanuel Christian School in Oshawa says that he's reluctant to extend a hand to homeschooling parents because he's afraid it would weaken his school.

Stan Baker's reaction is a common, though not unanimous one among staff in Ontario Christian schools responding to a new policy on services to homeschoolers by the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools.

"We've got our self-interest involved as well," admits Peter VanHuizen, principal of Calvin Memorial Christian School in St. Catharines, Ont.

"If you're going to be a school, you can't go halfway. If you promote homeschooling too much, you may be undermining the very credibility of the institutional approach."

Not necessary

But Trenton Christian School principal Arie VanDuyvendyk says that sense of competition isn't necessary.

"We're all in this thing called Christian education together," he says.

Several years ago VanDuyvendyk set up a system of

"satellite schools" for five homeschooling families while principal of Immanuel Christian Academy in Rulien, Ont. Families paid \$100 a year to participate in provincial assessment tests, class trips and school assemblies.

"It was a very informal relationship, which is probably why it worked so well," he says, noting that his approach differs from that of his current school or the Alliance.

The only time parents who homeschool are breaking community is when one also teaches at a local school, he says.

But VanHuizen claims the concept of community reaches beyond staff ranks.

"I wouldn't call homeschooling covenant breaking, but it is part of an emphasis to take everything in one's own control, to privatize life," he notes.

"Our responsibility as Christians to build institutions will be lost."

Sarnia Christian School vice-principal Alice DeVries said that her school is currently drafting a homeschooling policy that would end up establishing "some sort of relationship" between the two groups.

New 'school' gains students



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN ELGERSMA

CAYUGA, Ont. — A former principal of Holland Marsh Christian School north of Toronto has found a way for homeschoolers to receive provincial tests and issue graduation certificates.

After four years the Grand River Academy of Christian Education boasts 150 students from 63 area families. Homeschooling parents pay \$50 (\$25 for subsequent years) for advice from

non-profit principal John Elgersma and support from other families.

His home is registered with the Ministry of Education as the school's location, with each parents' home listed as a separate campus.

"Quite a number" of the students attend Reformed churches and come from area Christian schools, says Elgersma, a member of Covenant (Independent) Reformed Church in Balmoral, Ont.

Elgersma would like to have his students participate in gym and French classes at those schools, but has not yet asked because "they're a little defensive right now."

Books/Meditation

Keep the light on

"... and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was" (Matt. 2:9)

From time to time I go on retreat at a cot-

tage about two hours drive from my home. It's located on the corner of a farm in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, surrounded by fields. There is no telephone, no television, and is heated only by a wood-burning stove. The folks who run the place have carefully selected some of their favorite spiritually stimulating books to put on the shelves. They've provided a range of soothing cassettes for the tape player. And they stock the refrigerator with wholesome breakfast foods.

I recently went to this haven on Epiphany evening. We had had a prayer service at my church, so I was late in leaving town. I turned onto the farm road sometime after 11:00 Thursday night. It was dark, of course, and very cold; and a serious ice storm was starting. I had never arrived this late and was not sure I could find my way. I had not called to remind my hosts that I was coming and coming this late.

What if they had given up on me? What if I arrived only to find the cottage locked and no one home? What if I couldn't find it in the dark and ended up driving around in circles through this farm country all night?

An unanticipated beacon

In the midst of my worries I caught sight of a light. Across the fields I saw the cottage. The light was on and the blinds were up, turning the small house into a beacon, showing me the way. And there was smoke coming out of the chimney! Even before I arrived I knew that I had been anticipated; I would find what I was searching for in this house. The light shining across the fields led me to the driveway and the door of my retreat. How appropriate an experience for Epiphany evening!

And what an apt image of the calling of the church. We are called to be the light set on the hill, which cannot be hid and which draws all people to its brightness. As a gentile I am used to thinking that Epiphany celebrates the extension of God's revelation beyond the boundaries of Israel, even to me. I identify with the magi coming in from the desert. But as a member of the church, I ought to be identifying with the star, the light which leads people to a meeting with Jesus.

Imagine! God was willing to use even the idolatrous superstition of astrology as a means to lead the magi to him. He was not overly scrupulous about maintaining the purity of a particular religious tradition or style of worship when he set out to create a sign which would be comprehensible to these star-gazers.

In the same way, Paul stood before the Areopagus and quoted from pagan Greek poets, identifying the one true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with the unknown deity worshipped at some Athenian shrine. Paul said that he had become all things to all people that he might by all means save some. Jesus went so far as to become sin itself so that we might become the righteousness of God.

Stoke up the fire

I hear a great deal of patronizing conversation dismissing evangelism which appeals to the "felt needs" of the unchurched. But isn't that exactly what the Bible teaches us to do? If we really believe that in Jesus the hopes and fears of all the years are met and answered, why should we disdain acknowledging such hopes and fears when we speak to those still stumbling in the darkness of their sin?

When I finally arrived at my retreat cottage I found a place in which I was challenged to meet with God in an intimate way. But that was not really what I went looking for. I had anticipated a break, a place away from the phone and the TV, a place to regroup and be quiet. At the moment of my arrival, my desires were even more basic; a place with some food and a fire, a warm shower and a bed. The cottage met all these needs, providing all that I thought I was looking for; and then it surprised me with what I really needed.

I pray that all our homes and all our churches will provide that same experience of welcome, meeting people where they are in order to lead them to where they need to be. So turn on the lights! Stoke up the fire! And pull up the shades! The people still walk in darkness. They need to see our great light.

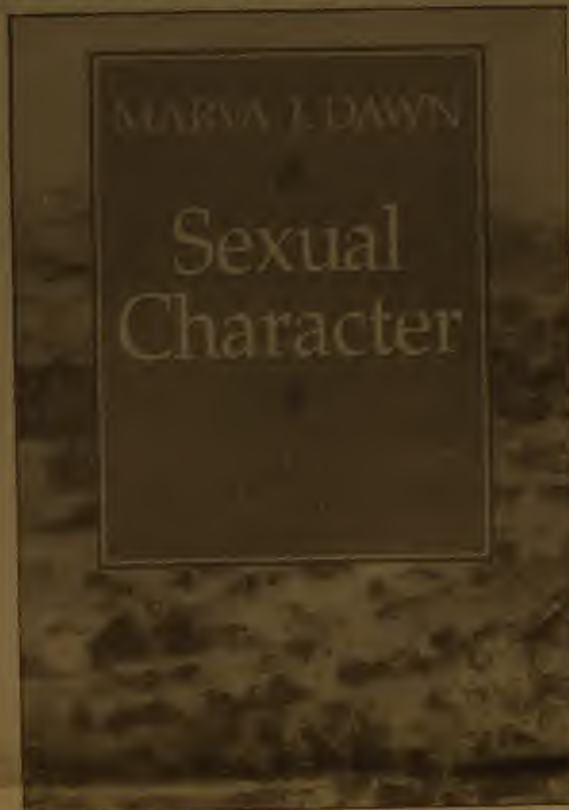
Laura Smit is pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Clayton, N.J.



A biblical picture of our sexuality

Sexual Character: Beyond Technique to Intimacy, by Marva J. Dawn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993. ISBN 0-8028-0700-3. Softcover, 172 pp., \$17.99. Reviewed by Robert VanderVennen.

No doubt, our society floods us with crazy views of human sexuality. The Bible's teachings seem dim, hardly known and practiced only by a few. In fresh ways this excellent book holds before us a reliable light for our path.



Much of the book deals with what the author calls "social sexuality." She reminds us that all of us are sexual beings - we are not neuters but male or female, and we are male or female in all the ways we exist. We are sexual persons in many ways besides genital sexuality.

Dawn is an ethicist and calls for an "ethics of character." Our attitude toward our sexuality must be more than rules, because behavior arises out of the kinds of persons we are. Character is developed and nurtured in community, so the question becomes: What kind of community do we create for ourselves?

The narratives we listen to, from the Bible and from role models, shape us. The Bible tells about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control and the like. Role models show how these virtues can be embodied in our lives, calling us to be compassionate and loving in a spirit of mutuality.

A sign of God's faithfulness

Sexual union is a sign of God's faithfulness and of our own faithfulness, says the author. The Bible depicts our

unfaithfulness to God as sexual adultery. God gave us sexual union to be a blessing to us only within marriage, she affirms.

Sexual union is not simply "having sex." We already "have sex" — we're all male or female. Society's view of sex is reductionistic, individualistic and hedonistic. Sex has become idolatry. It's not recreation, a favourite indoor sport. The full meaning of sexual union lies outside of immediate pleasure.

The book has good chapters on friendship, homosexuality, marriage, divorce, nurturing children, abortion and on teenagers. Teens should understand sexual union as "a covenant sign of permanent commitment in marriage," says Dawn.

Dawn concludes that churches should do a much better job of teaching and preaching about marriage and sexuality. In the face of the saturation of our culture with perverted notions of sexuality, we need to hear constantly what God, the author of sexuality, means it to be.

This book is a good tool for that. It should be widely read and discussed.

News

Christian agencies produce fruit beyond yearbook



PHOTOS: BERT WITVOET

Edward Den Haan poses next to fellow presenter Marcia De Haan. Ed baptised Marcia in the Charlottetown CRC in 1969.



A blending of church and non-church agencies brought out the breadth of the Kingdom vision (three meters wide). From l. to r.: Arie Van Eek (CCRCC), Graham Morbey (Huron Campus Ministry), Marcia De Haan and Ralph Luimes (OACS), Edward Den Haan (Huron Campus Ministry), Martin Oldengarm (CFFO), Harry Kits (CPJ), Al Dreise (Salem), Hank Kuntz (CLAC) and Ray Elgersma (CRWRC).

...continued from p. 1
Health Association told the story of abuse survivor Cathy.

Hank Kuntz of the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) recounted the story of sabotage at CLAC-organized worksites in Alberta. Ray Elgersma of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee told the story of a Filipino living near a garbage dump.

After a brief discussion in small groups, classis reassembled and shared its responses to the four stories.

Classis then heard about the work that each organization was doing. Besides hearing again from the four representatives mentioned above,

delegates also listened to mission statements from four more organizations.

Arie van Eek of the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada spoke about the three centres of the Christian Reformed Church that minister to natives and how "we Reformed people are able to build bridges between us and Canada's aboriginal peoples" because we are accustomed to standing over against the dominant culture.

Marcia De Haan of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools spoke of the desire of Christian schools to live out of God's standards for excellence.

Martin Oldengarm of the Christian Farmers Federation

of Ontario said that his organization calls on governments and other agencies to be stewards of God's creation, and he wondered whether our ability to be good stewards has kept pace with technological advancements.

Harry Kits of Citizens for Public Justice invited churches to become partners as his agency seeks to live the vision that he had learned from Scripture as a son of the Christian Reformed Church.

Fruit beyond the yearbook

Den Haan concluded by saying that both church and agencies are Kingdom missions

which need each other. "Fragmented and independent ministry is doomed to fail," he added.

Sidney Couperus, chair of Classis Huron, thanked the organizations for addressing classis and for reminding it that "there is a much broader concept of fruit, not counted in the yearbook of the Christian Reformed Church." He said that Christian organizations are often "more risk-taking, more ecumenical and more 'in the world but not of the world' than many of our churches."

He concluded by reading from Ephesians 6, which counsels believers and churches "to put on the full armor of God."

Delegates respond

And what did the delegates think of the exercise?

Bert Vanderlaan, an elder from Acton, thought it was "very needful for the churches to hear about the front-line situation. We can live a nice comfortable life, but when they shoot pipes full of holes [at CLAC-organized worksites] then you stand at the edge of the lion's den," he said.

Dirk Miedema, a pastor from Clinton, thought it was an excellent idea to present "a holistic picture of Christian action under one banner." But he felt that the presentations lacked passion and were too wordy and academic.

Margie Ridder, a deacon at Vanastra Community CRC, thought it was a "super idea" to work together like this. "As a unit we're a lot stronger," she

said.

Peter Damsma, an elder from Clinton, said that the idea occurred to him that this should be done in other classes. "It broadens your scope." To that he added: "Most of the time each organization paddles its own canoe. Now they got together and made a coherent presentation."

Feelings and emotions

Eldean Kamp, a church education consultant with the CRC's "Bibleway" curriculum and living in Guelph, said it was a good beginning. But the idea of getting the emotions and the intellect together did not happen as deeply as she would like to have seen it happen.

She thought a facilitator at each table would have helped and she regretted the fact that the organizational reps had not participated in the table discussions.

She also noted that most of the men at her table did not want to spend much time on how they felt about someone's pain. "They wanted to solve the problem."

After the classis delegates sang the hymn "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run," the presenters met briefly to review their successive journeys that afternoon through the field of Christian action.

Harry Kits and Marcia De Haan remarked that a joint presentation had painfully revealed that few women are in leadership positions in the various organizations.

*Need a break from the February doldrums?
Attend the*

Modeling Christ in the Nineties Conference

This annual event will be held from **February 18** (Friday evening) to **February 20** (Sunday noon) at the **Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre, Niagara Falls, Ont.**

Enjoy fellowship, discussion, prayer and walks to the Falls. The main speakers are: **George VanderVelde, Nick Overduin and Agnes Kramer-Hamstra.**

Registration deadline: **January 31, 1994.**

For more information and registration forms, contact **Alice Witvoet** at (905) 684-3991 (evenings) or (905) 688-5550, ext. 3412 (days).



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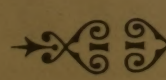
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	<p>Anniversaries</p> <p>1944 January 27 1994 "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures forever" (Ps. 118:1 and 29). In rejoicing with our Lord, we joyously announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents, AREND and HELEN LOOTSMA (ELGERSMA) "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight" (Phil. 1:9). With returning love and congratulations from your extended family: John & Ann Roukema — Thunder Bay and family Peter & Sharon Lootsma — Mt. Brydges and family Dorothy Lootsma — Binbrook and family Andy & Debbie Lootsma — Hamilton and family Bill & Faye Lootsma — Cambridge and family Helen Churchill — Hamilton and family. On this most joyous occasion, we wish to invite friends and relatives to share in this celebration. Open house at the Mount Hope Hall (Glanford Community Hall) on Saturday, Jan. 29, 1994, from 1 to 5 p.m. Best wishes only, please. Home address: 249 McNeilly Road, Fruitland, ON L8E 5H2</p>			
<p>Births</p> <p>GERRITSEN (nee RAUWERDA): We, Alan and Michelle, thank the Lord for the safe arrival of our firstborn, a son, JEFFREY ALAN born Jan. 4, 1994, at 11:02 p.m., weighing 7 lbs., 14 oz. First time grandparents are Jerry and Alice Gerritsen, ninth grandchild for Cor and Susan Rauwerda, great-grandchild for Oma Gerritsen, Oma Langbroek, Oma Hielema and Beppe Rauwerda. Address: 4246 Crescent Ave., Beamsville, ON L0R 1B8</p>				
		 <p><i>Congratulations to Arend and Helen Lootsma (nee Elgersma) on the blessed occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary!</i></p>		<p>Thank You</p> <p>FLIM: I want to thank all my family and friends for the visits, flowers, cards, phone calls and best wishes I received for my 95th birthday. I had a wonderful birthday and appreciate all my blessings. "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 103:2). G. H. Flim, 14 Canadian Oaks Drive, Whitby, ON L1N 6W8</p>

Classifieds

Thank You	Obituaries	Obituaries	Job Opportunities	Job Opportunities
<p>VAN ROOYEN: I wish to thank all those who by way of prayer, cards, and personally supported me after the passing away of my dear wife, Martha, on Dec. 18, 1993. A special thank you to my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Your support and love is of great comfort to me. I love all of you. Mr. Dirk van Rooyen, 40 Elm Street, Apt. 122, Chatham, ON N7M 6A5</p> <p>Obituaries</p> <p>Wildervank Duncan Holland B.C. May 18, 1919 - Dec. 21, 1993 "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:1,2). The Lord called home to eternal glory.</p> <p>HENDRIK EISEN dearly loved and sadly missed by his wife Hennie. Children: Hendrik & Alie Vanderschaaf Bill & Grace Van Belle Dick & Anna Eisen Grandchildren: Henry & Brenda, Margie & Ben, Jack, David, Carla, Juanita, Robert, Dwayne, Brent. Eight great-grandchildren and many relatives and dear friends. Correspondence address: Mrs. H. Eisen, 727 Castle St., Duncan, BC V9L 2J9</p>	<p>"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116). On Sunday, Jan. 9, 1994, with great peace, the Lord, in His infinite wisdom took home His child and our beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, TEUBECHIE JEANNETTE VANDEBURGT-VANRENNEN widow of Henk VandeBurgt since 1974 and grandmother of Corinne Heppner-VandeBurgt who died in 1993. Mother has been released from one-and-a-half years of physical and mental struggles. Her spirit is now with Jesus. We thank God for Mom's life. Her love for her family was deep. Being orphaned early in life, Mom blossomed when she got to know her heavenly Father. She remained faithful to Him in all circumstances. We, who have been affected and moulded by our parents' values are left to carry on. Memories fill our hearts. Herman & Betty VandeBurgt Madelene, Roland, Ian & Elizabeth, Geoff, Mark, Maneka Dineka & John VanRoos Tobey, Wendy, John Jr. John & Charlene VandeBurgt Ken, Corinne (deceased) (Al), Doug & Deb (Meghan), Rene & Ann-Marie (Julie), Henrika & Glenn Martiny & Jack VanMeggelen Kathy & Jeff (Zoe), James, Christine Memorial and funeral services were held Jan. 12, 1994, in Brampton and Toronto. We thank the Lord for dedicated family and friends who visited, cared and prayed for the last few years. We also thank the staff, pastors and volunteers of Holland Chr. Homes, Brampton, Ont., for their faithfulness. Correspondence address: Van-Meggelen, 516 Soudan Ave., Toronto, ON M4S 1K3</p>	<p>Oude Leye Smithville the Neth. Ont. April 11, 1916 - Jan. 2, 1994 "God sent His only son into the world so that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9). With that assurance we laid to rest our beloved brother PETER VAN MARRUM husband of Dora Van Marrum. He passed away after a long illness. Gerlof Van Marrum (predeceased by wife Tryntje) — Smithville Wykje Van Marrum (predeceased by husband Tjitze) — Fenwick Anna & Jan De Jager-Van Marrum — Woodstock Ninke & Willem Pomp-Van Marrum — Woodstock Jelle & Mary Van Marrum — Chatham Louw & Anita Van Marrum — Woodstock Willy Van Marrum (predeceased by husband Seije) — Woodstock Jeltje Enzlin-Van Marrum — Woodstock The funeral service was conducted by Rev. John De Jong in Smithville Chr. Ref. Church, Smithville, Ont., on Wednesday, Jan. 5, 1994. We commend Dora and the children to the care of God.</p>	<p>Orillia Christian School invites applications for the position of PRINCIPAL to assume responsibilities for the 1994/95 school year</p> <p>O.C.S. is an interdenominational school consisting of 135 students in grades K-8 and a dedicated staff of five full-time and four part-time teachers. O.C.S. is located in the heart of cottage country north of Toronto. O.C.S. has a very active school community presently working on a gym addition. Responsibilities will include 50 per cent administration duties, 50 per cent teaching. O.C.S. is looking for a committed Christian whose gifts and abilities will help prepare our children for the Kingdom's work.</p> <p>Please apply in writing with resumes and references to: Mr. Bill Robertson c/o Search Committee Orillia Christian School P.O. Box 862 Orillia, ON L3V 6K8 Phone: (705) 326-0532</p>	<p>HOLLAND MARSH DISTRICT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL has a possible opening for a PRINCIPAL beginning August 1994.</p> <p>HMDCS is a growing school of 300+ students with a full-time administrative position. Please direct all letters of inquiry or application for this possible position to:</p> <p>Mr. George Hart 50 Howard Road Newmarket, ON L3Y 4V9 (905) 898-4815</p>
<p>Rotterdam Trenton Holland Ont. March 23, 1913 - Nov. 30, 1993 "We, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:23). After a short illness, the Lord received to himself our dear husband, father and grandfather, DANIEL KOOPMANS He will be sadly missed by his wife, Cornelia (Schaillee), children and grandchildren: Peter & Carol Koopmans — Kelowna, B.C. Peter, Tracey, Christina, Kerry Alice & Hans deHooge — Mississauga, Ont. Jim, Karen, Derek Frank & Anne Koopmans — Chil-liwack, B.C. Robert, Jacqueline, Cheryl Dan — Trenton, Ont. and three great-grandchildren. He is survived by one and predeceased by two sisters in Holland. Services were held Saturday, Dec. 4, 1993, at the Ebenezer Chr. Ref. Church. Correspondence address: 54 Tripp Blvd., Suite 214, Trenton, ON K8V 5V1</p>	<p>We want to express our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Dora Van Marrum and family with the passing away of MR. PETER VAN MARRUM on Sunday, Jan. 2, 1994. May the Lord comfort them. He will be remembered by his friends of the Smithville Chr. Ref. Church 60+ club as past president and active member. "I have called you by name, you are mine" (Is. 43:1b).</p> <p>Look for our Calendar of Events on page 19...</p>	<p>"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want... My cup overflows..." (Ps. 23). After a lengthy illness PETER VAN MARRUM had to leave us and peacefully went to be with his Lord on Sunday, Jan. 2, 1994. He was 77 years old. He began his married life with the promises of Psalm 23, and died in that same assurance, with Dora, his wife and friend of 55 years, and all his children, at his side. We will miss him very much, but are greatly comforted by the Shepherd's tender love for us. Mrs. Dorothy Van Marrum (Griffioen) — Smithville Bert & Freda Bergman — Caistor Centre Ralph & Joanne Sol — Woodstock Marc & Dorothy Strooboscher — Smithville Clem & Debbie Van Marrum — Perkinsville, N.Y. John & Beverley Van Marrum — Caledonia He was also a proud grandfather of 19 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren. A service thanking God for his life was held on Wednesday, Jan. 5, 1994, in the Smithville Chr. Ref. Church, Smithville, Ont. Correspondence address: 16 Garden Drive, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0</p>	<p>KINGSTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL invites applications for the position of PRINCIPAL to assume responsibilities for the 1994/95 school year. KCS is an 160 student, interdenominational school, JK - 8, located in a pleasant city, on the shores of Lake Ontario. If you are a team leader, enjoy diversity in Christian Community, and strive for educational excellence, we would like to hear from you. The position includes some teaching.</p> <p>Please send your application to: Mr. Dan Wyngaarden Chairman - Board of Directors c/o Kingston Christian School 1212 Woodbine Road Kingston, ON K7L 4V2 Tel. (613) 384-2771 (hm) Fax (613) 542-0645</p>	

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<p>WHY NOT? The Christian Marriage Contact Service assists men and women in the USA and Canada who would like to marry or remarry. Why not write to us at C.M.C.S.? Enclose \$3.00 for our information package. P.O. Box 93090 Burlington, Ontario, Canada L7M 4A3 More male members are encouraged to apply.</p>	<p>JARVIS, Ont.: Jarvis District Chr. School invites applications from qualified resource teachers for the 1994-95 school year. The successful applicant for this full-time resource position will be responsible for the school's resource program as it has been developed over the last number of years. J.D.C.S. is experiencing growth and anticipates an enrolment of 270 students next year divided among 11 classrooms and 14 staff members. If you are interested in joining a team of enthusiastic and dedicated teachers as part of a supportive Christian community, please send your letter of application, resume and related materials to: Garry Glasbergen, Principal Jarvis District Chr. School Box 520 Jarvis, ON N0A 1J0 For further information please feel free to call: (519) 587-4444 (school) or (905) 765-7919 (home).</p>	<p>ADA REALTY LTD. 6012 Ada Blvd. Edmonton, AB T5W 4N9 (403) 471-1814 Sid Vandermeulen Contact us first when you think of moving to Edmonton and district. Het vertrouwde adres.</p>	<p>PACIFIC CHRISTIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Victoria, B.C. is seeking applications from TEACHERS to fill positions in both the Primary and Intermediate Divisions (K-7). Interested applicants must be able to qualify for B.C. Certification. For more information please contact: Karen Vos, Principal Pacific Christian Elementary School 671 Agnes Street, Victoria, BC V8Z 2E7 Fax: 604-479-3511</p>	
<p>Teachers St. Catharines, Ont. Beacon Christian High School requires a BIOLOGY-CHEMISTRY and part-time PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER for the 1994-95 school year. Send resume and statement of philosophy to: The Principal Beacon Christian High School 2 O'Malley Drive St. Catharines, ON L2N 6N7</p>	<p>Look for Peter and Marja on page 14...</p>	<p>Attention When you fax your display or classified ads to us (particularly obituaries), please type them and check spelling before you transmit the text to us. Thank you.</p>	<p>Job Opportunities</p>	
			<p>HELP WANTED Temporary full-time (Feb. 15, 1994 - Aug. 26, 1994). General secretary to provide clerical support for small office. Must have good word-processing skills, telephone and interpersonal skills and must be willing to work at varied tasks. Competitive salary. Apply by Feb. 4, 1994, to: Peter Zwart — CRWRC, P.O. Box 5070, Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8</p>	
			<p>Events</p>	

Calendar

Jan. 24 The annual "Christianity & Culture" lecture, 8 p.m., Brock University, St. Catharines, Ont. Speaker: *The Banner* editor Rev. John Suk on "The language of white supremacist religion." For info. call Brock CRC chaplain Rev. Nick Overduin at (905) 688-5550, ext. 3134, or his home (905) 688-1280.

Jan. 26-27 "The Christian, Mass Media and Popular Culture," a conference on interdisciplinary issues at The King's University College, Edmonton, Alta. Main speaker: Stefan Ulstain. Opening and keynote address at 2:30 p.m., Jan. 26. Open to the community. Info.: (403) 465-3500.

Jan. 28 Performing arts concert (instrumental and vocal chamber music), 8 p.m., The King's University College, Edmonton, Alta. Info.: (403) 465-3500.

Jan. 30 City-wide hymn sing led by Rev. Jake Kuipers. 8 p.m., First CRC, Sarnia, Ont. Special music by the "Harvesters Quartet." Everyone invited!

Feb. 11 "An Evening with Redeemer College," presented by RC students, faculty and staff. Reception at 7:30 p.m., program at 8 p.m., at Covenant CRC, St. Catharines, Ont.

Feb. 18 "King's View Friday," open house at The King's University College, Edmonton, Alta. Phone Admissions Office at (403) 465-3500 to register.

Feb. 18-20 "Modeling Christ in the Nineties Conference," at the Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre, Niagara Falls, Ont. Enjoy fellowship, discussion, prayer and walks to the Falls. Main speakers: George VanderVelde, Nick Overduin, and Agnes Kramer-Hamstra. Register by Jan. 31. For info. and registration forms contact Alice Witvoet at (905) 684-3991 (evenings) or (905) 688-5550, ext. 3412 (days).

Feb. 25-26 Marriage preparation seminar at First CRC, 287 Water St., Guelph, Ont. Info. and registration: (519) 822-7720.

Feb. 25-26 Students of London District Chr. Secondary School present "The King and I." At 8 p.m., LDCSS, London, Ont. Info.: (519) 455-4360.

Feb. 25-27 "Marriage Enrichment Weekend," presented by Salem Chr. Mental Health Assoc. Leaders: Herman & Betty Vanderburg and Mike and Shirleen Abma. At Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre, Niagara Falls, Ont. Info.: (905) 528-0353.

Mar. 3-5 Students of London District Chr. Secondary School present "The King and I." At 8 p.m., LDCSS, London, Ont. Info.: (519) 455-4360.

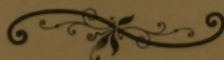
April 9 National convention of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, London, Ont. Watch for further details!

April 17-19 Annual convention of the Canadian Church Press, at Queen of the Apostles Renewal Centre, Mississauga, Ont. Info.: (416) 960-8500.

June 6-10 "Milk & Honey Summer Festival," a Christian vacation experience focussing on the theme, "Not by Bread Alone." At RC, Ancaster, Ont. Call Janet at (905) 648-2131.

June 23-26 "Canadian Christian Festival IV," at Copps Coliseum, Hamilton, Ont. Theme: "Sharing the Joy." Speakers include: George Carey, James Forbes Jr., David Mainse, Jean Vanier (Founder of L'Arche) and Lois Wilson. Info.: (905) 523-3100.

June 25 Christians across Canada participate in "A Day to Change the World," as part of the "Global March for Jesus." Watch for local announcements. Info.: (416) 778-7080.



25th ANNIVERSARY

Thanking God for His great faithfulness to us, Second Christian Reformed Church of Abbotsford, B.C., plans to celebrate, D.V., its 25th anniversary as a congregation March 3-6, 1994. All former members and interested persons are welcome to attend the praise and thanksgiving service to be held Thursday, March 3, 1994, at 7:30 p.m. in the church.

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News

Churches fail to observe special aboriginal year

John Pater

EDMONTON — Churches across the theological spectrum have at least one thing in common: for the most part they all ignored the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Peoples. That was the year just past — 1993.

Spokespersons from Pentecostal, Anglican, Lutheran, Christian Reformed and United Churches all say that the year's special focus went virtually unnoticed in their denominations.

"We didn't do anything as an overall thrust to mark the year," says Rev. Keith Bishop, secretary-treasurer of the Alberta-NWT conference of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. Identical responses were given by representatives of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Lutheran Church-Canada.

John Siebert, program officer for human rights and aboriginal justice with the United Church of Canada, says even among ecumenical aboriginal rights groups, "there's a real lull right now in solidarity [activities]."

Should have

Directors of the Christian Reformed ministries among native people in Winnipeg and Edmonton say they too saw only isolated attempts in their denomination to go along with the year's intended focus.

"We should have done something," says Rev. John Stellingwerff, director of the

Edmonton Native Healing Centre. "These special years are an opportunity to broaden our horizons and apply the gospel to a specific situation."

His counterpart in Winnipeg, Rev. Henk DeBruyn, director of the Indian Family Centre, wonders, "whose agenda is being served," when such national/international efforts are made but little is done about it.

DeBruyn says this isn't really new. He points to a "new covenant" made between Canadian churches (including the CRC) and aboriginal peoples in 1987. DeBruyn says that has been forgotten as well.

Magnanimous statements

The churches were not alone in their having ignored the year. The Canadian govern-

ment and even the United Nations itself did little outside of making broad, magnanimous statements to kick off the year.

The UN did set up a \$500,000 fund to be spent on indigenous celebrations and projects worldwide.

The Canadian government did sponsor various cultural, sports and artistic events as well as a poster contest. But there were no major legislative changes or funding commitments by governments anywhere which could have had real impacts on the lives of aboriginal peoples.

Canadian native organizations have mixed reactions to the lack of response from churches and governments.

Robert Groves, director of inter-governmental affairs for the Native Council of Canada, says they're upset over the government's lack of real commitment for change. And as for the churches — "we're not sure what they've done," he says, "we haven't heard."

Elizabeth Sinclair, executive assistant to Ovide Mercredi, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (A-F-N), calls the United Nations' special year "peripheral really."

She says natives have spent 1993 focusing on "healing." Sinclair says after the intense constitutional battles in 1992 and the divisions that created, they needed time to do some communicating among themselves.

Sinclair also questions

whether churches need to respond in a special way. She says that the A-F-N "did not make an official call for the churches to do anything" in conjunction with the special UN year.

John Siebert of the United Church considers that an important point. He asks: "Who should be setting the agenda for aboriginal issues? The UN? The government? Churches? Or the aboriginal people themselves?"

Siebert says ecumenical groups like the Aboriginal Rights Coalition (ARC, formerly Project North) — of which the Christian Reformed Church in Canada is a member — have "made a decision not to generate or initiate actions on behalf of others."

John Stellingwerff adds that aboriginal people have said to groups like ARC, "We need to work out our own destiny... we appreciate your support, but don't stand in our way."

The question of the churches' response to the aboriginal cause is not ended, now that the special UN year has passed. Plans are now in the works to declare the 1990s the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples. A proclamation to that effect is being planned for the end of this year.

So, the opportunity will arise again for asking how the Christian Church will, or should, respond to the aboriginal peoples of this land.



PHOTO: JOHN PATER

The aboriginal year: like a forgotten ladder leading to nowhere?

Churches engaged in significant action

John Pater

EDMONTON — Canadian churches were not idle when it came to aboriginal issues and concerns despite the fact they didn't do anything special during 1993.

One of the high profile happenings of the year was statements made by the four denominations involved in the running of Indian residential schools.

Countless numbers of native people have told of the horrors they experienced in being taken away from their homes and sent to these schools as children.

At the beginning of November, before a special session of

the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and United Churches "explained" their involvement in the schools. The churches acknowledged their part in the hurt done to many native people because of the schools, but they pointed to the fact it was government policy at the time to assimilate native peoples in this way.

The year 1993 also saw the Anglican Church of Canada offer a public apology to native peoples for the violence they had suffered in Anglican-run residential schools. Rev. Laverne Jacobs, co-ordinator for native ministries in the

Anglican Church, says, "This was a watershed moment in the church's life." He says since the 1950s the church has talked about its role in the residential schools, but "this was the first time as a national church" that they publicly apologized for what they had been part of.

The United Church of Canada also initiated actions in 1993 as part of its continuing attempts to address the residential schools' legacy. Monies from a special "healing fund" began being disbursed to individuals and communities hurt by the schools. This denomination also continues to be led by an aboriginal person. Rev. Stan MacKay is a member of

the Cree nation from Fisher Reserve, Man. His term as moderator of the United Church runs until August 1994.

The Christian Reformed Church wasn't out of the picture either last year. January 1993 saw the official opening of the denomination's third Canadian ministry among native peoples, the Edmonton Native Healing Centre.

The year also saw the CRC's Indian-Metis Christian Fellowship in Regina continue its 15-year ministry under a new director, Bert Adema.

Rev. Henk DeBruyn, who started the CRC's first ministry amongst native peoples in Winnipeg 20 years ago (January

1974), says the past year has seen people "take ownership of the kind of spirituality that exists at the Indian Family Centre." He says there has emerged a real understanding that "this is a *Christian Native* centre."

Many other denominations have ongoing work among the country's aboriginal peoples. The Lutheran Church-Canada for example, has a ministry on reserves in northern Saskatchewan. And the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada have mission workers in communities in the Northwest Territories.